



BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA

PREVENTION ☐ EDUCATION ☐ ADVOCACY

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EXHIBIT

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January 27, 2009

Rep. Theresa Henry, Chair

Joint Appropriations Subcommittee for Health and Human Services

In support of funding for the Resource Facilitation Service

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Brain Injury Association of Montana is a 20-year-old grassroots organization of survivors, families, caregivers and friends devoted to brain injury education, prevention and support. We share a hard-earned understanding that lives can be rebuilt following a brain injury.

Traumatic brain injury has been called the silent epidemic. Often diagnosed and almost always poorly understood, any brain injury—including so-called mild brain injury—can cause life-altering changes in memory, vision, hearing, speech, personality and other cognitive processes. Rehabilitation, education and awareness, and the development of new skills can help survivors recover much of their quality of life.

The BIAMT has provided Montana's traumatic brain injury survivors with an important public health service for the last three and a half years.

Developed and funded in partnership with the Senior and Long Term Care Division, the Resource Facilitation Services is a low-cost, computer- and telephone-based, information and referral and self-advocacy support service for people living with traumatic brain injuries and their families. RFS is the only free, statewide service for brain injury survivors. Our office is open 40 hours per week, and our resource facilitators also work on evenings and Saturdays.

During the 2008 calendar year, we served over 600 individuals or families through initial and follow-up phone calls and mailings. We helped brain injury survivors obtain evaluations and rehabilitation services, government benefits programs, vocational rehabilitation services and other assistance. We helped some our clients stay in school, stay married or stay employed.

The 2007 Legislature recognized the value of RFS and included a \$100,000 one-time appropriation for the 2009 fiscal year. Our partners in the Department of Public Health and Human Services recommended funding for RFS in their proposal to the Governor. We respectfully request continued funding at this level.

Thank you for helping our community of traumatic brain injury survivors by helping us to maintain this valuable service.

The Brain Injury Association of Montana Board of Directors

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Mark Sanders, student, MSU College of Technology, Great Falls
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Montana's Resource Facilitation Service
Support and education for people living with a brain injury and their families

The Resource Facilitation Service is free public health service for people who have just received traumatic brain injuries, as well as for more than 10,000 Montanans already living with traumatic brain injury. RFS provides information and support to people with brain injuries during the critical months immediately after the brain injury, when services are critical to help the brain recover; and RFS helps people cope with the impacts of brain injury on themselves, their jobs and their families. RFS does not provide case management, but it supports survivors and their families solve the puzzle of living with brain injury

How it works

About half of all RFS participants are enrolled while they are in still in the hospital or emergency room. The resource facilitator sends out information tailored to the particular needs of that survivor immediately, then makes an initial phone call about three weeks later. The facilitator makes additional calls at six, 12, 18 and 24 months. The resource facilitator provides information about brain injury diagnosis and recovery, helps identify and troubleshoot problems, connects people with community resources, and educates family members, employers and educators about what it means to live with brain injury.

The person with the brain injury (or the parent, if the survivor is a child) can opt out of the program at any time, or they can extend the program after two years if there is an ongoing need for service.

Anyone living with a brain injury, or a family member who is assisting, can also enroll in the resource facilitation service by calling 800-241-6442, or 541-6442 in Missoula.

After every contact, the resource facilitator follows up with a written letter and additional information. Additional follow-up calls are scheduled as necessary to support the efforts of the survivor or family member to solve a problem.

The Resource Facilitation Service annually visits participating hospitals to educate them about the importance of giving patients the opportunity to sign a release so that they can be enrolled in the RFS and provides hospitals with information to share with patients before discharge. During 2008, state funding allowed RFS to expand to two more hospitals, and during 2009, additional hospitals will be added.

We have received a grant to work with a study of motor vehicle crashes in Montana. Our goal in this project is to make information about RFS available through first responders, including law enforcement officers.

In April, 2009, information about RFS will be included in the information packets provided to returning Montana National Guard soldiers.

Why Resource Facilitation is important

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 10,000 Montanans currently have a long-term or lifelong need for help to perform activities of daily living as a result of a TBI.

According to one study, about 40% of those hospitalized with a TBI had at least one unmet need for services one year after their injury. The most frequent unmet needs were:

- Improving memory and problem solving;
- Managing stress and emotional upsets;
- Controlling one's temper; and
- Improving one's job skills

TBI can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, language, learning, emotions, behavior, and/or sensation. It can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age.

Without RFS, survivors and family may spend months without the information they need to make decisions and seek services. The lost time can have devastating effects on recovery, family dynamics, and family finances. RFS is the only resource of its kind in Montana, and it is available free of charge for everyone who needs it, for as long as they need it.

The Resource Facilitation Project in Minnesota, upon which Montana's RFS is based, documented these results for resource facilitation:

- A rate of return to work at twice the national average;
- An increased likelihood that children receive appropriate educational supports;
- Increased family support and understanding and decreased family crisis;
- Reduced long-term dependence on public assistance;
- A reduced risk of institutionalization.